

93-1767

# Trade Center Bombing, seek 'Clarity of Motive'

o Ryder employees, had arrived up the van in a red GM sedan accompanied by a companion. r officials said that roughly two s after the explosion, Salameh arred at the office and claimed van had been stolen the night re. He asked for his \$400 dam- deposit, but was told he must file a police report.

ilameh's name was already in the s files. In 1990 he had demon- ed publicly on behalf of El-Say- Nosair, an Islamic firebrand who been charged with, and acquitted he 1991 slaying of Jewish De- League founder Meir Kahane. meh had visited Nosair at the prison in Attica, N.Y., where he serving a sentence on lesser ges.

ilameh gave investigators a par- lar suspect to consider, and, as rtant, drew their attention to a ip of activists who orbited ugh the larger Islamic commu- in New York and New Jersey attended the Abu Bakr mosque Brooklyn and the Al-Salam que in Jersey City. Rahman had idched at both mosques.

he FBI had not previously con- red these activists to be terror- merely passionate militants. Yet FBI had access to intelligence mation about them gathered as result of at least three occur- es: the prosecution of Nosair; emer- gence of Rahman as a pres- in the New Jersey-New York mic community; and the 1991 der of Mustafa Shalabi.

he Nosair trial was a watershed it among Middle Eastern mil- ins in New York. Kahane, a hero to y Jewish radicals, was viewed as mbol of Zionist oppression to Islamic radicals. During the trial, the l groups staged demonstrations, on opposite sides of the court-

ment blames the Islamic Group for a series of bombings and murders, most especially the assassination of Egyptian President Anwar Sadat in 1981.

Egyptian security forces are en- gaged in a massive, nationwide crackdown aimed at fundamentalist militants, including members of the Islamic Group. The government has jailed 700 suspected extremists in response to a wave of violence that has left nearly 150 people dead, at the hands of either police or extremists.

Before he emigrated to the United States, Rahman was acquitted of involvement in Sadat's death, but an FBI intelligence briefing during the Persian Gulf War persuaded at least one senior official to believe that he posed a potentially serious threat from his new base in New Jersey.

When Rahman arrived in the United States, Shalabi found him a residence. Thereafter, they raised funds for the Afghan resistance, but ultimately had a falling out, according to published statements by several associates. In March 1991, Shalabi was found dead in his Brooklyn home, shot and knifed. There have been no arrests.

In addition, five months before the trade center bombing, about 20 members of the two mosques who attended Nosair's trial or visited him at Attica were subpoenaed by a federal grand jury, according to the New York Times. Ahmed A. Satta, a postal worker, told the Times that FBI agents grilled him about Nosair, Shalabi and Rahman.

To officials, then, the circumstantial clues being gathered by agents in New Jersey seemed to fit into a larger context. For example, Salameh's New York state drivers license listed his residence as 57 Prospect Park, S.W. Brooklyn—the home of Ibrahim

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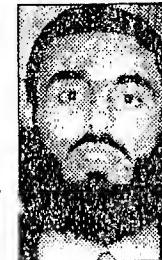
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## WORLD TRADE CENTER BOMBING SUSPECTS

**S**six suspects have been charged in connection with the World Trade Center bombing. Four were jointly indicted in the bombing and remain in custody. One is being held on obstruction charges and the sixth reportedly has fled the country.

**MOHAMMAD SALAMEH, 25**

Jordanian.  
Jersey City, N.J.,  
handyman  
arrested March  
4. Indicted in the  
bombing.



**NIDAL AYYAD, 25**

Kuwaiti.  
Maplewood, N.J.,  
chemical engineer  
arrested  
March 10.  
Indicted in the  
bombing.



**MAHMUD ABOUHALIMA, 33**

Egyptian. Wood- bridge, N.J., cab driver arrested in Egypt and brought to the U.S. March 24. Indicted in the bombing.



**SILAL ALKAISI, 26**

Jordanian.  
New York area  
resident arrested  
March 25.  
Charged with  
aiding and  
abetting the  
bombing.



**IBRAHIM ELGABROWNY, 42**

Held Iraqi pass- port. Brooklyn contractor arrested March 4. Charged with obstruction and possessing fraud- ulent passports.



**RAMZI AHMED YOUSEF, 25**

Jersey City, N.J., resident who reportedly fled the country. Indicted in the bombing.



SOURCE: News services and staff reports

—Compiled by Barbara J. Saffir

THE WASHINGTON POST

office, agents arrested him. In his pockets, they found the business card of Nidal Ayyad, 25, a chemical engineer.

Eventually, the FBI executed at least 10 search warrants in New Jersey.

Agents found evidence connecting Salameh to a rental unit at the Space Station Storage facility in Jersey City. Employees identified Salameh as the man who rented a shed in November under the name "Kamal Ibrahim."

Upon searching this unit March 5, agents discovered several hundred pounds of chemicals that, if properly combined and triggered with a small explosive, could produce a powerful blast. They also discovered that the chemicals—hundreds of pounds of urea and nitric acid—were purchased in November by "Kamal Ibrahim."

Storage facility employees told the FBI that the day before the bombing they saw a man they believe was

Ayyad's office phone. Agents learned that Salameh and Ayyad had a joint account at a local bank. They discovered that on Feb. 15 Ayyad had rented from National Car Rental the same type of car that Salameh arrived in at the Ryder van rental office. Moreover, "Salameh" was listed as an additional driver on the rental car. A witness from the Ryder office identified Ayyad as the same man who accompanied Salameh when he rented the van.

On March 10 agents descended on Ayyad's first-floor apartment at 60 Boyden Ave., Maplewood, N.J. Inside, they found what a prosecutor later described as a modified timing mechanism that an explosives expert described as a time delay firing system. Ayyad was carrying an American Express card in the name of Bilal Alkaisi. At least one witness told the FBI that a man named Alkaisi accompanied Salameh to the storage shed "on several occasions."

purported involvement with the Af- ghan resistance. Associates said Abouhalima traveled to Pakistan for military training and that he was a follower of Rahman and sometimes served as his driver. Rahman has disputed this claim and publicly de- nounced the bombing.)

Aside from these characterizations of Abouhalima—which will likely be contested in court—there has been no public disclosure of what direct evidence, if any, connects him to the bombing. He was eventually returned to New York. U.S. officials have refused to discuss their knowledge of the arrest or treatment of Abouhalima.

For weeks, the trade center bombing was an incomplete act of terror- ism because it lacked a political mes- sage. But on March 28 the New York Times published a letter it received four days after the bombing. The Times quoted a law enforcement source who said there was "incontro-

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